

The SKELETON FINGER

by Headdon Hall

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BEGIN HERE TODAY

SIR DUDLEY GLENISTER, believed to have been the murderer of George Glenister, is proven innocent by—

JAMES WRAGGE, Scotland Yard detective, who fastens the guilt on Stephen Colne, former cabinet minister. Colne takes his own life, while Wrage examines to—

KATHLEEN GLENISTER, sister of George Glenister. Kathleen's doubt of Wrage's ability to clear up the mystery vanishes.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"And a lot of other things which don't touch the main line of this inquiry," Wrage continued. "You will hear of them later, but let us keep to the point. By ordinary detective work I got hold of a diary which Mrs. Coningsby had stolen from Trickey, and it gave me my first real insight into the case, though for a while it strengthened the suspicion that Sir Dudley had killed his cousin.

"Here are the facts: Your brother, Miss Glenister, went away to America to escape the consequences of a harmless flirtation with Sally Grimes. That young person, greatly daring, had built on a few careless compliments the hope that she might marry the then heir to the baronetcy. She even went so far as to go to Sir Philip and threaten a breach of promise action. Sir Philip took the matter seriously, and father and son were not on good terms when they parted. It is probable that

Mr. George went away as much to avoid the strained relations at home as from fear of legal proceedings which would certainly have gone in his favor.

"Then Sir Philip died and George either never heard of his death or he was too absorbed in his gold-mining venture to return and claim the title. Be that as it may, when time went on and the title remained in abeyance Dudley, the next in succession, sent his clerk Trickey out to America to trace him. He located George Glenister at Lone Wolf City, a mining camp in Montana. Trickey cabled to his employer for instructions and received a reply ordering him to return home without communicating with George.

"On his arrival in London, Dudley told Trickey that he would deal with the matter by letter. After much trouble I got at the contents of that letter, and a copy exists which will be available as evidence, if he would come home and meet him at Beechwood at 10 o'clock on the evening of the 7th of June two years ago he was prepared to make an offer for financing the gold mine by floating it as a company.

"On the face of it that was fairly conclusive that Sir Dudley had lured Mr. George back to England and murdered him so that he might succeed to the baronetcy. After the episode of the skeleton finger Sir Dudley saw the danger that this view might be accepted by a judge and jury, and your activities, Miss Kathleen, eventually

drove him to extremes which constitute him a murderer in intent, though not, thank God, in fact.

"For though I was misled for a while into a belief that he killed George Glenister, all he had set out to do in the beginning was to swindle his cousin out of the gold mine. Hinkley has a record that Dudley was at Beechwood on the 7th of June that year, and the diary states that on the 9th he again sent Trickey to America with instructions to manufacture evidence of George Glenister's death at Lone Wolf City. Trickey carried out his mission so cleverly that the family solicitors, who went out later to verify the facts, were deceived and in turn deceived the High Court into granting leave to presume George Glenister's death.

"My trouble after these discoveries was that though I had ample evidence for convicting Sir Dudley for fraud and conspiracy, I had

"What a perfect fool I have been," she said.



none to convict him for murdering his cousin. And all the time Mr. Colne was urging and threatening me. I felt a nervous breakdown

coming on, and in a fortunate moment I consulted Doctor Willoughby Melville, who had cured me when Mr. Colne nearly drove me off my head years ago. Then he did it with physics. This time he did it by handing me a scrap of paper on which he had written the name of the Beechwood murderer. It was that of the Right Honorable Stephen Colne, bracketed with that of Sally Grimes.

"Perhaps he was pulling your leg," said Kathleen rather hysterically.

"No, miss, he wasn't," Wrage replied with firmness. "At first I had as much difficulty in bringing the crime home to Mr. Colne as I had in the case of your cousin. He fought like a cornered rat to the last. He had suspected that Sir Dudley was holding you prisoner at the mill and he clutched at that to convince me of Sir Dudley's guilt in the murder affair. Probably he would have had you released before if he had not been keeping the outrage in reserve as a last weapon of defense. When Doctor Melville gave me that scrap of paper he might have known something for Sally Grimes, alias Mrs. Simon Trickey, alias Miss Maud Blair, made things quite easy tonight. Whether she did it because she thought she was going to die and wanted to ease her conscience, or from a desire to square accounts with a gentleman who had thwarted her matrimonial aims, is beyond my reasoning powers.

"Miss Sally Grimes, always ambitious, had two strings to her bow—Mr. George Glenister and Mr. Stephen Colne. Mr. Glenister, rather than be entangled with her, fled to America. Mr. Colne, living a double life—that of the austere respectable statesman in London, and that of a middle-aged debauchee in the country—had much closer relations with the future cinema actress than the rival, who was never really a rival. When Mr. Glenister arrived at Beechwood Station late on the evening of the 7th of June Mr. Colne and Sally met him by chance on the road, and Colne told the girl to leave them. She went off home, but before she had gone very far she heard a shot. Colne was good as admitted to her the next day that he had killed Mr. Glenister from jealousy, thinking that his return would disturb their pleasant relations.

"This, of course, gave Miss Grimes a tremendous pull over the Right Honorable Stephen, but she failed to push it so far as to become the wife of a cabinet minister. Being a wise wench, knowing the right side for butter on her bread, she accepted the only terms she could exact—a handsome pension which would enable her to embark on a career of adventure in London. There by one of those queer kinks in the web of Fate which even the Yard cannot unravel, she met and married Mr. Simon Trickey, the blackmailer of the other villain in the case."

Kathleen extended her right hand to Wrage and rested the other on Norman's shoulder.

"What a perfect fool I have been," she said. "I am almost too ashamed to ask your pardon, Mr. Wrage. Perhaps the fact of my folly having nearly cost me my life will make you magnanimous. You, too, Norman, must have been cursing me for a vindictive idiot."

"You have not much to reproach yourself for," the inspector made smiling answer. "Indirectly you aided the solution by convincing Sir Dudley that he was liable to be suspected of the murder, and more than suspected if his fraudulent conspiracy with Trickey came to light. The resulting fear drove him to the outrageous conduct which, by causing tonight's catastrophe, was the means of obtaining final proof from the mouth of the keeper's daughter."

"Will Simon Trickey be arrested?" asked Norman.

"That will be for the chief of my department to decide," replied Wrage. "But I should surmise not. Simon is of the kidney that is pretty sure to round on his partner by turning King's evidence. He has practically done so already by informing me of the contents of Sir Dudley's letter and by promising me a press copy of it."

"I should be inclined to let Mr. Trickey off," remarked Kathleen demurely. "You see, to some extent he is in the same boat as myself. He has got his knife into Sir Dudley and means to make things hot for him."

"Alf Grimstead loosed off a great guffaw. "Then I reckon, miss, I'm in that boat along of you and the bloke you're talking of. Lord, but I made it fair 'ot for that swab on the stone floor and I'd have made it 'otter if I'd had my service boots on."

They all laughed, and Kathleen proposed that after their strenuous day bed was the best place for them.

Inspector Wrage was a long time going to sleep. His brain was busy in an attempt to conjure up an answer to the question which piqued his professional curiosity. He had family ties. He was a good husband and a good father. But before everything he was a detective. How had Doctor Melville managed to write on that scrap of paper the name of the Beechwood murderer and in so doing free him forever from the rattling free him forever from the rattling less thrall of Mr. Stephen Colne? THE END

SOCIETY NEWS

MRS. A. H. HANDLE ENTERTAINS GUILD

Mrs. A. H. Handle entertained the members of the Women's Guild of the Episcopal Church at luncheon in the Parish House Thursday.

After the luncheon Rev. A. G. H. Bode of Anaheim gave a very instructive talk on "Church Customs," telling the origin of the stained glass, paintings and music used in the Episcopal Church.

Rev. Mr. Bode, who is an accomplished musician, played a group of his own compositions during the afternoon.

Mrs. Handle was assisted by Mrs. W. T. Klusman, Mrs. Jesse H. Sprout, and Mrs. George Evans.

LOMITA NOTES

Mr. and Mrs. J. B. French of Star street and Mr. and Mrs. George Reger of San Pedro attended the Metropolitan Theatre in Los Angeles Sunday.

Mrs. H. P. Madden of Los Angeles was an overnight guest Wednesday of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Lyons of Eschelman avenue.

Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Thompson of Redondo boulevard were Sunday guests of Mrs. Thompson's parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Dudley, of Monterey Park.

W. H. Maddy of Stockton, Kan., is a guest at the home of his son, Merle Maddy, of 257th street.

A picnic in Santa Ana Canyon was enjoyed Sunday by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Edwards and daughters and Misses Ruby Thompson and Fern Raine.

Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Cook and daughter, of Glendale, were weekend visitors in Lomita.

Mrs. Elizabeth Gridley of Oak street attended a luncheon Saturday at the home of her niece, Mrs. M. Maxfield, of Los Angeles.

Dinner guests Friday of Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Rattenbury of Pennsylvania avenue were Mrs. Phoebe Gold, Miss Rebecca Gold, of San Pedro, and Mrs. G. E. Wooster and Miss Grace Marshall, of Long Beach.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Bascom of Arizona street were dinner guests Friday of Mr. and Mrs. John Reus of Los Angeles.

Mr. and Mrs. John Grafe of Cypress street were recent guests of Mr. and Mrs. O. H. Tryon of San Gabriel.

Mrs. Carter Murphy of Arizona street is reported on the sick list.

Harry Marshall and Reginald Rattenbury, of Pennsylvania avenue, visited their ranch at Carlsbad Saturday.

H. G. Randles of Pennsylvania avenue, who has been confined to his home for several weeks with broken ribs and rheumatism, is able to be about again.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Tonkin of Los Angeles spent Sunday at the home of Mr. Tonkin's brother, T. J. Tonkin, of Beacon street.

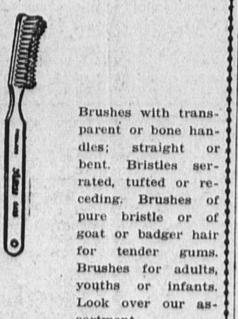
Miss Mary Wilkinson and George Wilkinson saw "The Big Parade" at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood Saturday.

Mrs. Louis Tinning of Allene street is recovering from a week's illness.

Mrs. Helen Bailey of Los Angeles spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. O. L. Fink of Chestnut street.

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